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ACTION EAP-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIJING
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9704
INFO AMCONSUL SHANGHAI
AMCONSUL SHENYANG
AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU
AIT TAIPEI
AMCONSUL CHENGDU POUCH)

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 32847

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PGOV, CH
SUBJECT: BEIJING STUDENTS: CONTINUED UNCERTAINTY

REF: (A) BEIJING 32612; (B) BEIJING 32610

1. (C) SUMMARY. ALTHOUGH BEIJING REMAINS QUIET, THERE WERE TWO DEMONSTRATIONS AT BEIJING NORMAL UNIVERSITY IN THE EARLY MORNING HOURS OF DECEMBER 29 AND DECEMBER 30. ABOUT 300 STUDENTS WERE INVOLVED IN THE FIRST DEMONSTRATION, WHICH WENT TO BEIJING UNIVERSITY, PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY AND QINGHUA UNIVERSITY. THE SECOND DEMONSTRATION ABORTED WHEN POLICE REFUSED TO LET STUDENTS LEAVE THE UNIVERSITY GROUNDS. PRESS COMMENT ON THE DEMONSTRATIONS HAS PLAYED UP THE ROLE OF OUTSIDE AGITATORS, AND ONE SUCH PERSON HAS APPARENTLY BEEN DETAINED. CONSERVATIVE PERSONALITIES WANG ZHEN, BO YIBO, SONG RENQIONG, HU QIAOMU AND DENG LIQUN WERE GIVEN PROMINENT COVERAGE IN PD FOR STATEMENTS AT

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MEETING FOR A STORY TELLER OF THE "ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS" IN WHICH THEY CONDEMNED "COMPLETE WESTERNIZATION", DENIGRATION OF CHINA, AND NATIONAL NIHILISM. WE DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT THIS MEANS THAT REFORM IS IN RETREAT OR THAT THESE FIGURES ARE CHINA'S NEW POLITICAL HEAVYWEIGHTS. RATHER WE SUSPECT THAT THEY HAVE BEEN PUSHED FORWARD BY DENGISTS TO TAKE THE HEAT AND PRE-EMPT THE POLITICAL HIGH GROUND. END SUMMARY.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE

REVIEW AUTHORITY: ROBERT J. MARTENS Page - 1

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2. WHILE THE GENERAL SITUATION IN BEIJING CONTINUES TO BE QUIET, THERE WAS A SMALL DEMONSTRATION IN THE EARLY MORNING HOURS OF DECEMBER 29 AND AN ABORTIVE DEMONSTRATION IN THE EARLY MORNING HOURS OF DECEMBER 30. BOTH DEMONSTRATIONS BEGAN AT BEIJING NORMAL UNIVERSITY. IN THE DECEMBER 29 DEMONSTRATION, ABOUT 300 (DIFFERENT SOURCES GIVE DIFFERENT NUMBERS) STUDENTS FROM BEIJING NORMAL UNIVERSITY MARCHED TO PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY, BEIJING UNIVERSITY AND QINGHUA UNIVERSITY TO URGE STUDENTS THERE TO DEMONSTRATE, WHICH THEY DECLINED TO DO. THE DEMONSTRATION, WHICH BEGAN AT ABOUT 2:00 AM, BROKE UP AT 8:00 AM. THE SECOND DEMONSTRATION, IN THE EARLY HOURS OF DECEMBER 30, NEVER GOT OFF THE GROUND BECAUSE POLICE REFUSED TO LET STUDENTS LEAVE THE CAMPUS.

3. THE DECEMBER 29 DEMONSTRATION HAS RECEIVED AMPLE PRESS COVERAGE, INCLUDING A FRONT PAGE ARTICLE IN THE DECEMBER 30 PEOPLE'S DAILY. THE PD ARTICLE BEGAN BY NOTING THAT THE DEMONSTRATION OCCURRED IN VIOLATION OF THE NEWLY APPROVED REGULATION ON DEMONSTRATIONS (REF A), AND CLAIMED THAT THE STUDENTS HAD BEEN EGGED ON BY PEOPLE WITH ULTERIOR MOTIVES. IT SAID THAT POSTERS HAD APPEARED AT BEIJING NORMAL ON DECEMBER 27

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AND 28, OF WHICH ONE CONTAINED A DISCUSSION WHICH OPPOSED THE CONSTITUTION. AN ARTICLE ON THE SAME DEMONSTRATION IN THE DECEMBER 30 BEIJING DAILY TOOK A MORE SCURRILOUS APPROACH. WHILE RECITING THE SAME BASIC FACTS, IT CLAIMED THAT THE STUDENTS HAD BEEN URGED ON BY AN "UNEMPLOYED PERSON" (WUYEGUANYUAN) FROM SOMEWHERE ELSE (WAIDI), AND THAT AN UNEMPLOYED PERSON WITH A SOUTHERN ACCENT HAD BEEN HEARD SHOUTING "ABOLISH THE SINGLE PARTY SYSTEM; ESTABLISH A MULTI-PARTY SYSTEM." FINALLY, IN AN ASIDE CLEARLY MEANT TO BE A REAL SHOCKER, THE ARTICLE CLAIMED THAT A BIG CHARACTER POSTER APPEARED AT BEIJING NORMAL DECEMBER 27 WHICH SAID "FXXX THE BASIC PRINCIPLES|" STATE EDUCATION COMMISSION VICE CHAIRMAN HE DONGCHANG REPEATED THE CHARGES OF OUTSIDE AGITATORS AT THE DECEMBER 30 PRESS CONFERENCE REPORTED PARA 7, AND SAID THAT ONE UNEMPLOYED PERSON HAD BEEN DETAINED BY POLICE.

4. A POSTER WAS PUT UP THE EVENING OF DECEMBER 30 AT BEIJING UNIVERSITY WHICH CALLED FOR STUDENTS TO MARCH TO TIANANMEN SQUARE ON JANUARY 1. THIS POSTER HAS SINCE BEEN TORN DOWN, BUT WE UNDERSTAND THAT NEW POSTERS HAVE GONE UP CALLING FOR STUDENTS TO GO TO TIANANMEN SQUARE IN SMALL GROUPS ON JANUARY 1. A FOREIGN EXPERT AT THE UNIVERSITY TOLD EMBOFF THE EVENING OF DECEMBER 29

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THAT TENSION WAS INCREASING, NOT DECREASING, AMONG STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY.

5. THE DECEMBER 29 EDITION OF PD REPORTED A MEETING AT ZHONGNANHAI AT WHICH LEADING CONSERVATIVES, SOME LITTLE SEEN IN RECENT MONTHS, APPEARED IN ORDER TO CONGRATULATE STORY TELLER YUAN GUOCHENG FOR HIS VERSION OF THE CHINESE CLASSIC "THE ROMANCE OF THE THREE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BEIJING 32847

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KINGDOMS." PRESENT AT THE MEETING WERE WANG ZHEN, BO YIBO, AND SONG RENQIONG, ALL BILLED AS VICE CHAIRMEN OF THE CENTRAL ADVISORY COMMISSION, POLITBURO MEMBER HU QIAOMU, AND SECRETARIAT MEMBER TENG LIQUN. WANG ZHEN, WHILE NOT MENTIONING STUDENTS BY NAME, CONDEMNED

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THOSE WHO ADVOCATED NATIONAL NIHILISM, DENIGRATED CHINA, AND SOUGHT "ALL-ROUND WESTERNIZATION" (QUANPANXIHUA). BO YIBO, HU QIAOMU AND DENG LIQUN SECONDED THESE REMARKS.

6. SONG RENQIONG WAS MORE OPEN: PROGRESSIVE FIGURES, HE SAID, SUCH AS THE PATRIOTIC CHICKEN FARMER FROM HEILONGJIANG AND FRONTLINE FIGHTERS FROM THE VIETNAM BORDER SHOULD GO TO THE UNIVERSITIES TO EXPLAIN TO STUDENTS THE BITTER STRUGGLE OF WORKERS, PEASANTS, CONFIDENTIAL

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AND PLA FIGHTERS TO BUILD SOCIALISM AND TO INSTRUCT STUDENTS ON APPLYING THEMSELVES IN THEIR STUDIES. IT IS PERHAPS SIGNIFICANT THAT ALL OF THESE SPEAKERS, WHILE REAFFIRMING THEIR DEVOTION TO REFORM, CALLING FOR SUPPORTING REFORM, THE OPENING TO THE OUTSIDE, AND ECONOMIC INVIGORATION, FAILED TO MENTION POLITICAL STRUCTURAL REFORM. (COMMENT. THE PATRIOTIC CHICKEN FARMER WAS RECENTLY INTERVIEWED ON TELEVISION. HE SAID THAT HE HAD DONE MORE THAN HIS SHARE FOR THE NATION AS A SPECIALIZED HOUSEHOLD CHICKEN FARMER, AND WAS TIRED OF BEING ACCUSED OF HAVING A "SMALL PEASANT MENTALITY.")

7. AT A DECEMBER 30 PRESS CONFERENCE FOR FOREIGN JOURNALISTS, STATE EDUCATION COMMISSION VICE CHAIRMAN HE DONGCHANG SAID THE SITUATION WAS GOOD AND THAT OFFICIAL POLICY TOWARD STUDENTS WOULD STRESS EDUCATION AND GUIDANCE. YOUNG PEOPLE, HE SAID, COMMIT ERRORS, "AS WE DID WHEN WE WERE YOUNG." HE STRESSED THE COMMITMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT AND PARTY TO REFORM AND TO THE FOUR BASIC PRINCIPLES. HE ADDED THAT ASIDE FROM A FEW FEELERS WHICH CAME TO NOTHING, THERE HAD BEEN NO APPLICATIONS FOR DEMONSTRATIONS UNDER THE NEW DEMONSTRATION REGULATIONS. HE VOLUNTEERED THAT THE NEW POLICY OF PROVIDING SCHOLARSHIPS FOR SOME STUDENTS BASED ON ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND LOANS FOR OTHERS WOULD NOT BE CHANGED. (COMMENT. HE CLEARLY WANTED TO MAKE PUBLIC A HARDLINE RESPONSE TO WHAT IS CLEARLY A STUDENT COMPLAINT.)

8. (C) COMMENT. WE FIND THE SUDDEN EMERGENCE INTO THE LIMELIGHT OF CONSERVATIVES INTRIGUING AND EQUALLY INTRIGUING THE ABSENCE FROM VIEW IN RECENT DAYS OF CONFIDENTIAL

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REFORM LEADERS SUCH AS DENG, HU YAOBANG, ZHAO ZIYANG AND HU QILI. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT REFORM IS IN RETREAT OR THAT THE CHARACTERS WHO EMERGED AT THE "ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS" TEA PARTY ARE CHINA'S NEW BAND OF POLITICAL HEAVYWEIGHTS. RATHER, WE SUSPECT THAT DENG AND HIS ALLIES HAVE PUSHED THESE CONSERVATIVES FORWARD BOTH TO TAKE THE HEAT AND IN A REVIVAL OF THE OLD DENGIST POLITICAL TACTIC OF SEIZING THE HIGH GROUND. WE DOUBT THAT TALK OF HEILONGJIANG CHICKEN FARMERS OR NATIONAL NIHILISM WAS POPULAR WITH STUDENTS, ALTHOUGH MANY OLD CADRE NO DOUBT NODDED THEIR HEADS IN AGREEMENT. BUT THE LINE BEING PUT OUT IS TOUGH AT A MOMENT WHEN THAT IS THE POLITICALLY CORRECT THING TO DO; WHEN THE MOMENT IS PAST, THE CONSERVATIVES WILL RETREAT INTO THE TWILIGHT, WHICH THEY HAVE REALLY NEVER LEFT. END COMMENT. TOMSEN

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